

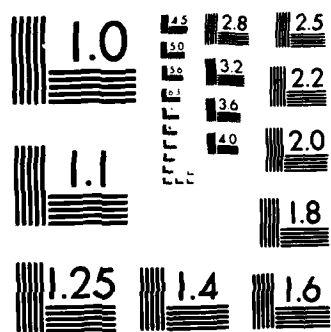
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ABSTRACT OF PROFESSIONAL PAPER

AN APPLICATION OF AN INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT TO UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BASE LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

Since the 1970s, the Information Center (IC) concept has received acclaim as a solution for increasing End User productivity. Basically the Information Center, as defined by IBM, is a Department catering to End User data automation needs at their level. In other words, the Users are doing their own computer processing with the help of the IC.

Presently, the Information Center concept is being implemented in both the business community and in the U.S. Government. However, the Department of the Air Force is missing from this list. Air Force Base Level Organizations should have capabilities similar to those being used in civilian Information Centers to access information.

This study examined the informational needs of Base Level Organizations and developed an Information Center concept suitable to meet those needs. The concept was then applied to show how these needs might be resolved. The concept addresses four areas: a mission statement, Information Center functions, staff, and evaluation.

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Fall 1984, 72 Pages

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PROFESSIONAL PAPER

AN APPLICATION OF AN INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT
TO UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BASE LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

Submitted by

Michael D. Acres

Computer Information Systems

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Master of Science

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado


Fall 1984

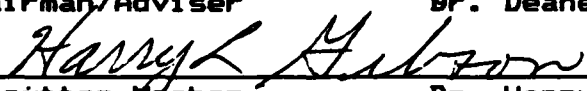
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FALL 1984

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE PROFESSIONAL PAPER PREPARED
UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY MICHAEL D. ACRES ENTITLED "AN
APPLICATION OF AN INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT TO UNITED
STATES AIR FORCE BASE LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS" BE ACCEPTED AS
FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
SCIENCE IN COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS.

Committee on Graduate Work


Chairman/Adviser Dr. Deane M. Carter


Committee Member Dr. Harry L. Gibson


Outside Committee Member Dr. Donald W. Dobler

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Fall 1984

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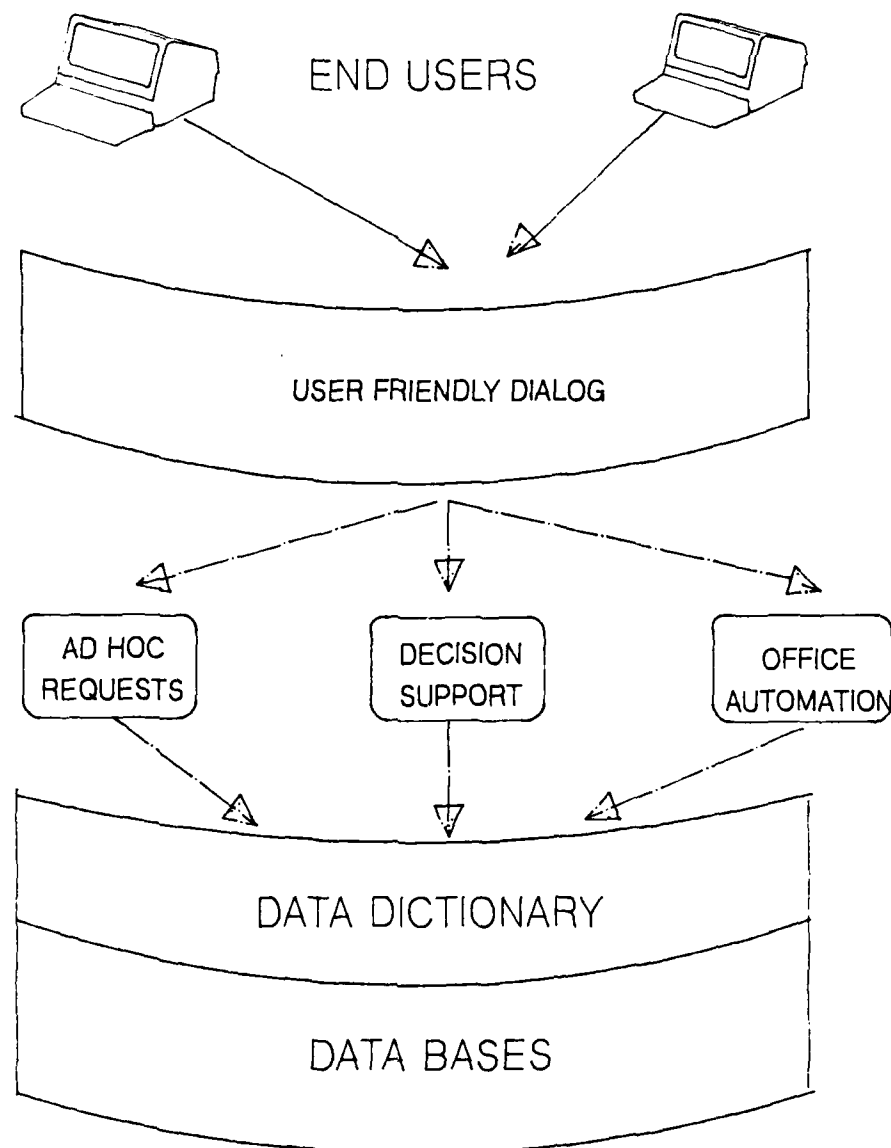
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

F. Richard Lennon from United Technology said it well, "The Information Center is a giant step forward in a company's ability to give its employees a simple, effective way to meet their own departmental and individual information processing needs." (1) Information Centers (ICs) in the "civilian" environment are providing a means for helping eliminate the applications backlog and giving End Users access to locked-up data while maximizing their Data Processing (DP) resources. (2)

The Information Center concept first surfaced in the 1960's. End Users rarely had direct access to computer terminals that were linked to the company mainframe. Instead, the Management Information System (MIS) Departments controlled all facets of computing from systems development to report generation. In the 1970's, IBM reintroduced the concept. (3) Essentially, the "new" concept defined the Information Center as a Department catering to End User data automation needs at their level. The Center provides End Users with hands-on access to the company's mainframe computer or microcomputers. In addition, DP staff members are available to assist the Users in manipulating the desired data. An IC concept is illustrated at Figure 1, Page 2.

FIGURE 1
AN EXAMPLE OF AN INFORMATION CENTER



Information Centers are rapidly finding a home in many corporations. The "Crwth Information Center Survey" (4) conducted by Crwth noted that approximately 1,400 Information Centers have been established since 1976. Approximately 2,100 Centers are expected to be in operation by the end of 1984. A Data Processing Management Association (DPMA) Survey, answered by about 200 members, revealed that more than 40% of those answering have an Information Center. An additional 19% will have an IC in place by 1985.(5) As George Harrar, Senior Editor for COMPUTERWORLD, stated, "The premise and promise of the Information Center is simply stated: Users can solve many of their own problems when provided with proper tools and techniques."(6) As seen in the above discussion, ICs are becoming popular in the business world.

Presently, there are 20 federal offices in the Washington, D.C. area that have established Information Centers.(7) This development has occurred over the last two years in such organizations as the Veterans Administration, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Library of Congress, the Army, the Navy, the U.S. Postal Service, the Labor Department and the House of Representatives. However, the Department of the Air Force is missing from this list.

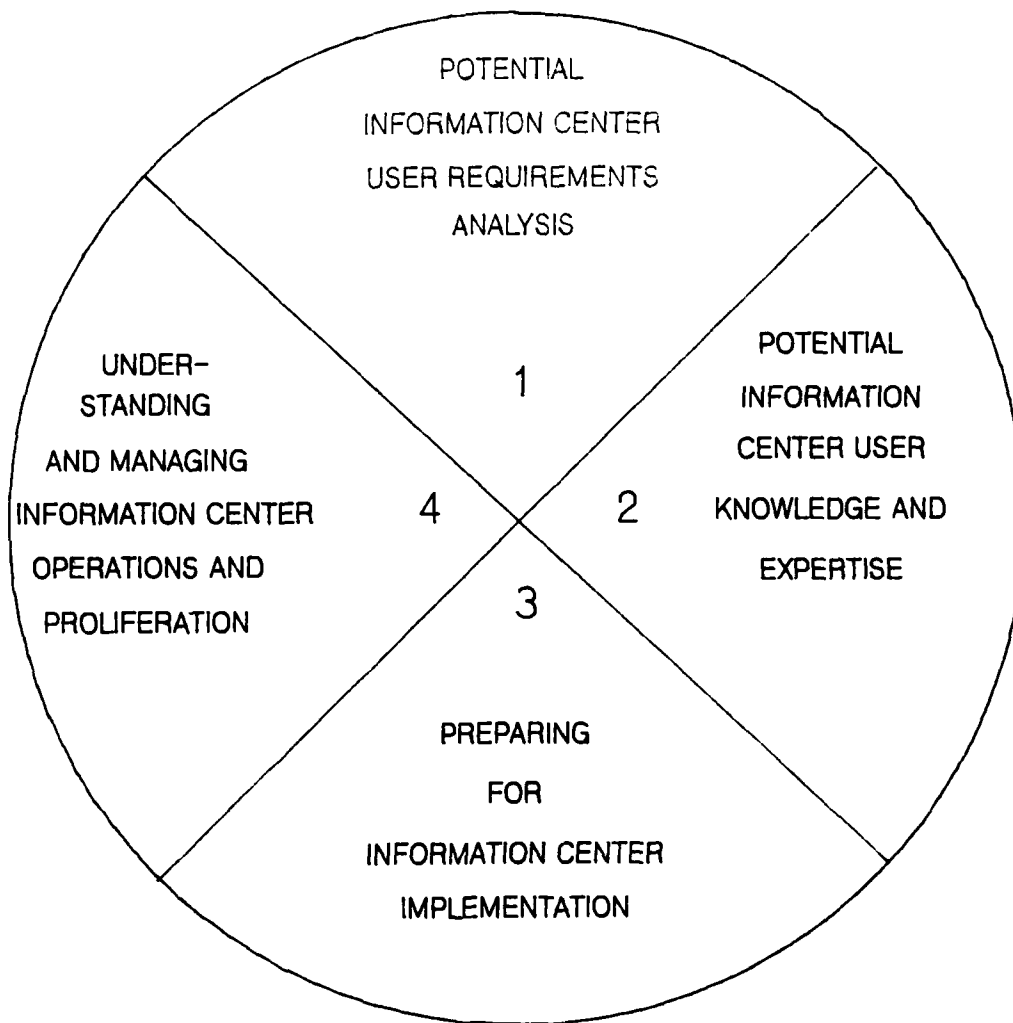
The Department of the Air Force is essentially a big business. Its managers and employees want to process and

analyze data in a timely manner similar to their "civilian counterparts". Daily Air Force operations revolve around the Air Force Base. As such, there are many organizations located on the Base that must function smoothly. These organizations, referred to as Base Level Organizations, correspond closely to departments within civilian businesses. For example, Base Level Finance handles money matters for the Base, as does a Finance Department in a civilian business manage the company's money. Hence, managers and their employees at Base Level Organizations should have similar capabilities to access information.

OBJECTIVE

Since the Information Center is heralded as a solution for decreasing the applications backlog and increasing the End Users productivity in the "civilian environment", the objective of this study is to evaluate the Information Center concept in terms of its ability in meeting the needs of Air Force Base Level Organizations to solve their daily operating problems.(8) In 1983, the Air Force conducted a study addressing the explosive growth of information technology and concluded that "technological advances had made it more difficult for the Air Force to conduct normal business in the realm of information systems".(9) If the Information Center can assist in meeting this need, a plan will be developed for utilizing the concept. An article by Chester Mills detailed a plan (Figure 2, Page 5) for constructing an IC.(10) During the plan's first phase, End User requirements

FIGURE 2
INFORMATION CENTER
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



SOURCE: DATA MANAGEMENT
FEBURARY 1984

and functions to be performed within the IC are examined. As Mills' article establishes an Information Center planning process, it will serve as an excellent tool for developing an Air Force Information Center concept. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the first phase of Mills' plan will be used as a guideline.

SCOPE and LIMITATIONS

This study is concentrating on the Information Center concept and its ability to meet present and potential information needs of Base Level Organizations. Therefore, Base Level Organizations common to all Air Force Installations are studied. In order to gain a better understanding of Base Level Organizations, the following Bases were examined:

TABLE 1
Air Force Bases Studied

<u>Function</u>	<u>Base</u>	<u>Location</u>
Training	Lowry AFB	Denver, Colorado
Strategic Missiles	F. E. Warren AFB	Cheyenne, Wyoming
Combat Flying	Dyess AFB	Abilene, Texas.

Lowry and F. E. Warren were studied because of their close proximity to Colorado State University. Dyess was studied because the Base Level Computer Manager is an acquaintance. Also, the physical aspects of the Information Center, general hardware and software requirements, and the Center's location will be discussed for information purposes only.

METHODOLOGY

Primary and secondary research were undertaken for this study. Interviews were undertaken with Air Force personnel to develop a first hand impression of Base Level decision-making problems and information needs. To better understand how Information Centers are currently being used, civilian businesses were interviewed. Secondary sources essentially involved library research. Articles addressing specific Information Center examples and concepts associated with ICs were read. As the IC concept is relatively new, only the most current articles were studied. The articles selected were published after 1981. These articles were mainly extracted from computer-based periodicals and journals such as COMPUTERWORLD, DATAMATION, DATA MANAGEMENT, etc.

Information collected from primary and secondary sources were used in formulating an Information Center concept suitable for an Air Force Base environment. Using secondary sources, a preliminary concept was formulated. Then, using interview results, the preliminary concept was refined. This refined concept was then applied in an effort to facilitate Base Level problems.

PROCEDURES

Initially, Chapter Two provides an insight into how control flows through the Air Force Command structure. The remainder of the Chapter was devoted to describing organizations generic to Air Force Bases. This Chapter will provide a concise view of how the Air Force Command structure works

and how Base Level Organizations function to meet the needs of the Command structure.

In Chapter Three, an Information Center concept, suitable for an Air Force Base, was developed. Initially, an historical look at the IC concept shows how the need for Information Centers, in the business community, evolved. Then, using secondary sources as a basis, an initial concept applicable to the Air Force was developed. Finally, this initial concept was refined with information gathered from primary sources (ie., interview with local businesses).

In Chapter Four, problems associated with decision-making and information needs at Base Level Organizations are identified. Next, the Information Center concept, developed in Chapter Three, was applied in an attempt to facilitate these problems or needs.

Finally, Chapter Five summarizes the proposed Information Center concept and its ability to facilitate daily problem-solving activities on an Air Force Base. As only the first phase of implementing an Information Center was addressed, a starting point for further study is recommended. Endnotes, at the end of each Chapter, will be used in lieu of footnotes. At the end of this report is a Bibliography containing materials referenced in this study.

ENDNOTES

1. Wayne L. Rhodes. "The Information Center Extends a Helping Hand." Infosystems, Jan. 1983, p. 26.
2. Chester R. Mills. "The Construction of an Information Center." COMPUTERWORLD Extra - Micro Mission., Nov. 30, 1983, p. 71-72.
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CHAPTER TWO

AIR FORCE BASE LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

An organization's mission must be understood if organizational problems are to be effectively studied. The Department of the Air Force comprises all elements of the Air Force. It is administered by a civilian Secretary. The principal functions of the Air Force are assigned by the Secretary of Defense. By examining the Air Force's mission, primary functions and subsequently Base Level operations, it will become clear why these low level Base Organizations are important to the Air Force and can benefit from using an Information Center.

MISSION

The Air Force's primary mission, as it is sometimes referred to, is to "fly and fight." In other words, the mission is to provide aerospace forces capable of supporting the Nation's objectives in peace and war. In accomplishing this mission, the Air Force must provide:

1. Strategic aircraft and missile forces necessary to prevent or fight a general war;
2. Land-based tactical air forces needed to establish air superiority over ground battle areas and air support to ground forces in combat;

3. The primary aerospace forces for the defense of the United States against air and missile attack; and
4. The primary airlift capability for use by all the Nation's Military Services. (1)

FUNCTIONS

Functions can be divided into two categories: those the Air Force is primary responsible for, and those performed in conjunction with other Services (ie., Army, Navy). Primary functions include: (2)

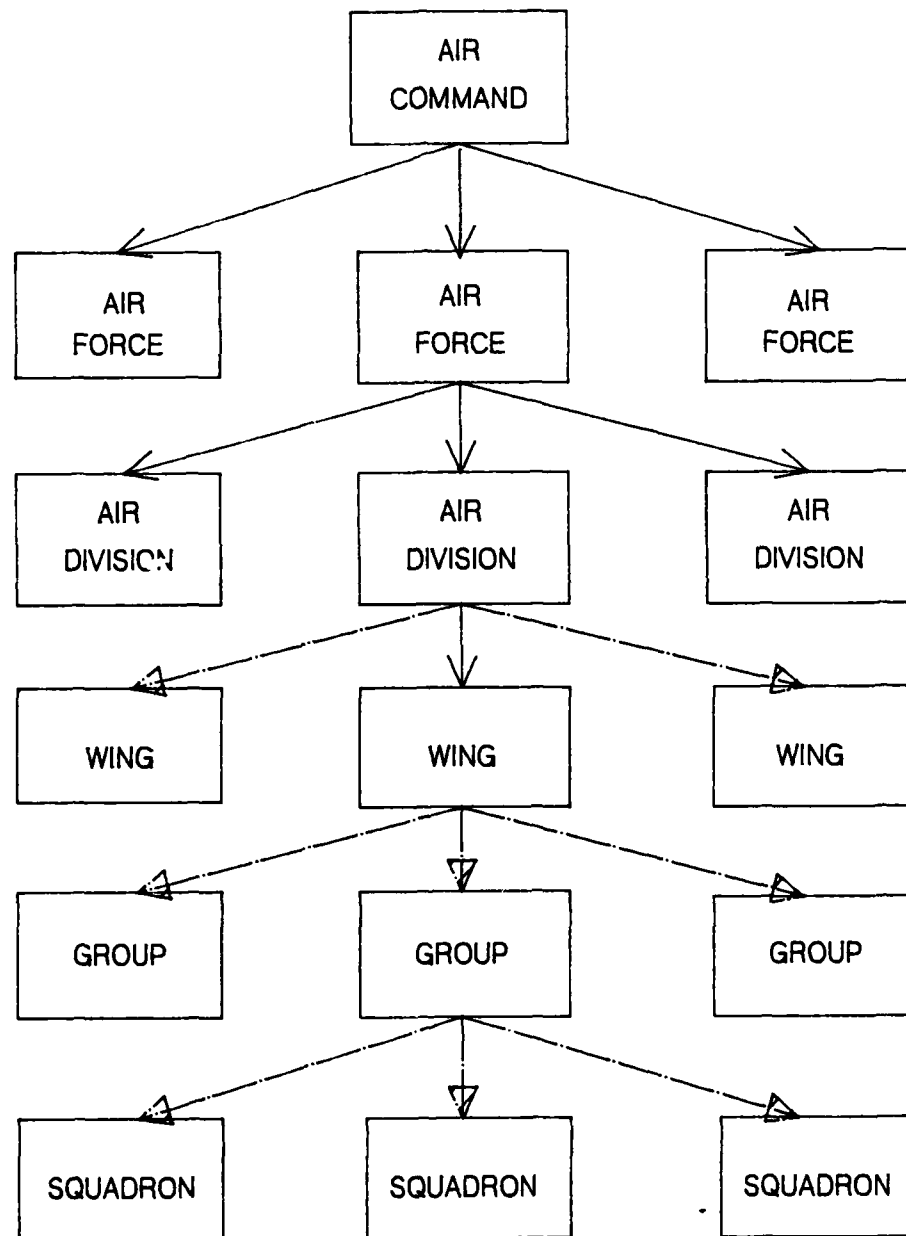
1. Conduct prompt and sustained combat operations in the air to defeat enemy airpower;
2. Formulate doctrine and procedures for the organizing, equipping, training, and employment of the Air Force forces;
3. Provide forces for strategic air warfare;
4. Provide air transport for worldwide deployment;
5. Provide adequate, timely, and reliable intelligence;
6. Furnish close combat and logistical air support to the Army and Marines; and
7. Provide aerial photography for cartographic purposes.

Collateral Functions include: (3)

1. Interdict enemy sea power;
2. Conduct antisubmarine warfare and to protect friendly shipping; and
3. Conduct aerial mine-laying operations.

Before describing Base Level Organizations, the Air Force command structure (Figure 3, Page 12) should be explained.

FIGURE 3
EXAMPLE OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATION



The command structure is as follows: (4)

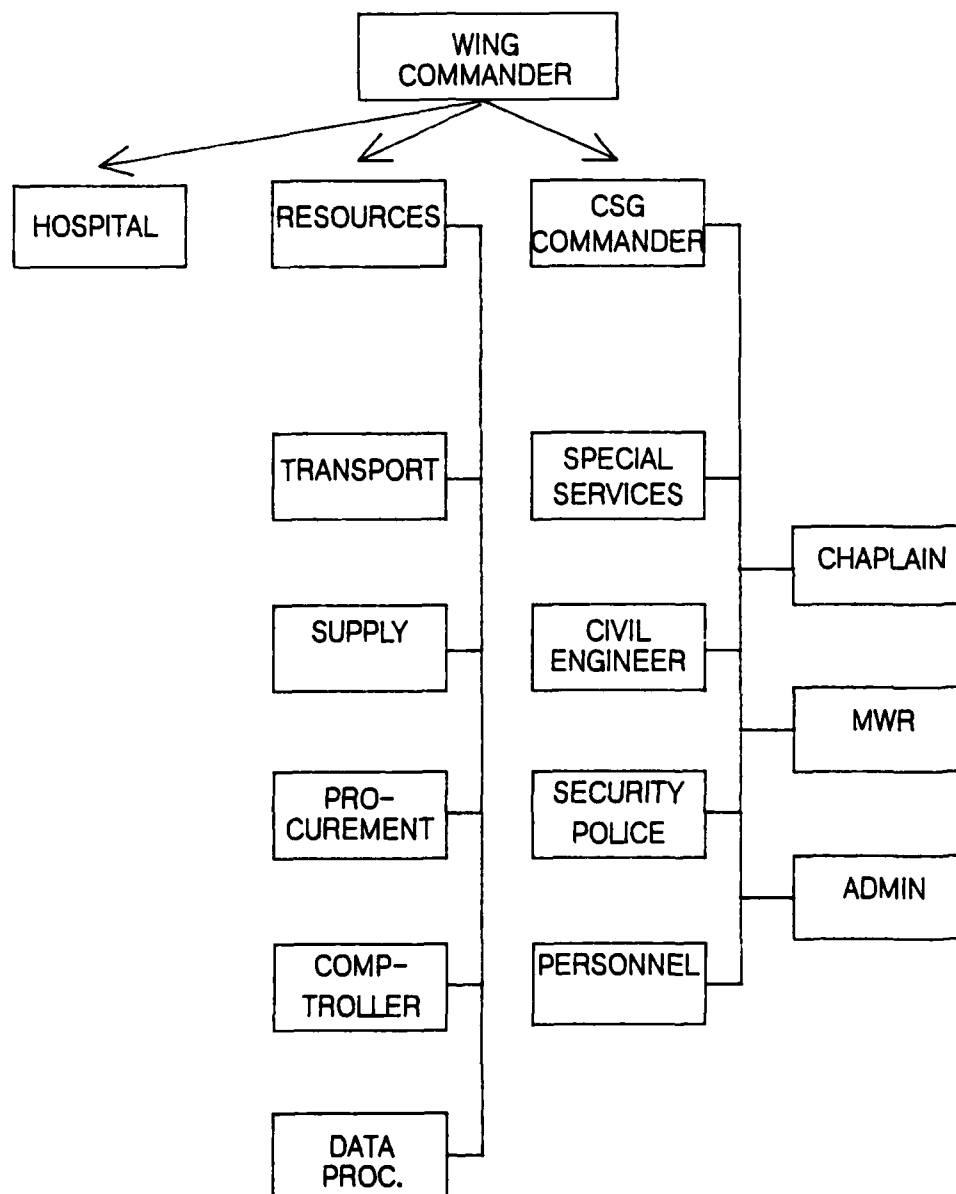
1. Squadron - composed of a headquarters and two or more flights. This is the basic Air Force administrative unit and the smallest unit operated separately.
2. Group - composed of a headquarters and two or more squadrons.
3. Wing - composed of a headquarters and squadrons. A wing is capable of independent operations.
4. Air/Missile Division - composed of a headquarters and two to five wings.
5. Air Force - contains elements of two or more divisions designated to do a particular task.
6. Air Command - two or more air forces. An air command may not have aircraft or missile assigned to it. For example, the Air Force Logistics Command.

Hopefully, the importance of Base Level Organizations is clear. If these Organizations cannot function smoothly, the grass roots structure of the Air Force will begin to crumble. These units provide the Air Force with the information necessary to accomplish its' primary mission.

BASE LEVEL ORGANIZATION

Base Level Organizations exist to support the Base's numerous functions such as, flying, training, research, and development. A typical Base Organization is shown on Figure 4, Page 14. Even though the organizational structure of each Base varies to match its primary function, there are still numerous Organizations generic to each Base.

FIGURE 4
TYPICAL BASE LEVEL ORGANIZATION



These Organizations are:

1. Security Police: Provide security and law enforcement support for military facilities. This organization is normally divided into two branches, Operations and Administrative Security. Functions include protection of personnel and property, classified material and information, and traffic control and other activities similar civilian police departments.
2. Civil Engineering: Responsible for the maintenance and repair of Base building and facilities. Accomplishing these tasks requires services such as of carpenters, masons, welders, electricians, plumbers, cooling and heating specialists, and painters. In, addition, this organization maintains the Base utilities providing electricity, water, and gas to the Base.
3. Supply: Insures the day to day supplies necessary to keep the Base functioning are available. This includes locating the source of supply, order the items, update and follow-up on supply status, validate requirements and deliver the supplies or equipment to the requester.

Also, Supply acquires, stores, and distributes fuels to all military vehicles on Base.

4. **Comptroller:** Assures effective financial management throughout the Base, provides accounting for appropriated funds provided for the operation of the Base and the mission performance of all units assigned to the Base. Also performs management analysis and special studies for any and all management problems encountered on the Base. This includes providing an estimate of budgetary requirements, maintaining accounting records as required by official Air Force Policy and payment of financial obligations of all units on Base.
5. **Transportation:** Services 24 hours a day the Base's transportation needs, including shuttle services on Base.
6. **Vehicle Maintenance:** Services military equipment and supervises military and commercial transportation of people, house goods and supplies.

7. Procurement: Purchases locally produced goods and services need to support the Base in its daily activities.
8. Resource Plans: Assists the commander by providing planning, programming, budgeting and special projects support in the resource management area.
9. Consolidated Base Personnel Office (CBPO): Provides personnel support for military and civilian people assigned to the Base.
10. Administration: Reproduces correspondence and training materials, stores and issues publications and forms, operates a postal distribution system and is responsible for operating the computerized word processing system on the Base.
11. Chaplain: Provides religious services.
12. Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR): Sees to the recreation and off-duty needs of the military family. Including operating the Base club system, golf course, swimming pools, hobby shops, recreation centers and intramural athletic programs.
13. Public Affairs: Keeps Base people and local area informed of happenings on the Base. Also responsible for distributing

news releases to local, state, national and international news media. Another function is to monitor the speakers program - individuals called on to talk about the Air Force, their job, or give demonstrations.

14. Hospital: offers services such as general medicine, surgery, dentistry, internal medicine,
15. Data Automation: Provides local computer support to satisfy management and reporting requirements of Base Level functional activities. Presently, most Divisions operate a Burroughs B3500 third generation computer system. This system normally supports 20-40 terminals in areas such as personnel, civil engineering, and the comptroller.

If an Air Force Base is to function smoothly, all of these Organizations must be able to capture essential data and process it rapidly and efficiently. With the microcomputer explosion, computer hardware/software is now available to assist these Organizations with the capturing and processing of data. As a result, Air Force managers and individuals alike are wondering what exactly can a microcomputer do for them. Microcomputers are powerful tools that can allow Base

Level Organizations to accomplish their functions more accurately and faster. Plus, microcomputers can provide Users with data base management systems to manage activities such as, local inventory, personnel rosters, personnel evaluation records, and personnel scheduling.

General Thomas M. Ryan, Jr., Commander in Chief, Military Airlift Command(MAC), indirectly reflected how an Information Center can be of use to these Organizations in his response to the following question:(5)

Q: Do you believe that MAC managers at all levels would increase their effectiveness by using a small computer as a management tool?

A: I'm not convinced all MAC managers would have an effective application for a small computer, but I think that there are far more possibilities than have been addressed. I encourage our managers to investigate the potential that computers offer. .

As General Ryan points out, managers need to investigate how microcomputers might be applied to their way of doing business. An Information Center may be just the place for managers to experiment with microcomputers.

ENDNOTES

1. Kinney, Major General A. J., USAF (Ret). The Air Force Officer's Guide. 23rd Edition, 1976, p. 352.
2. Air Force Manual 1-1. "Functions and Basic Doctrine of the United States Air Force." Feb. 1979, p. 2-1.
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4. Kinney, p. 354.
5. Douglas, Capt Charles K., USAF. "CINCMAC discusses airlift issues." Airlift The Journal of the Airlift Operations School, Spring 1984, p. 9.

CHAPTER THREE

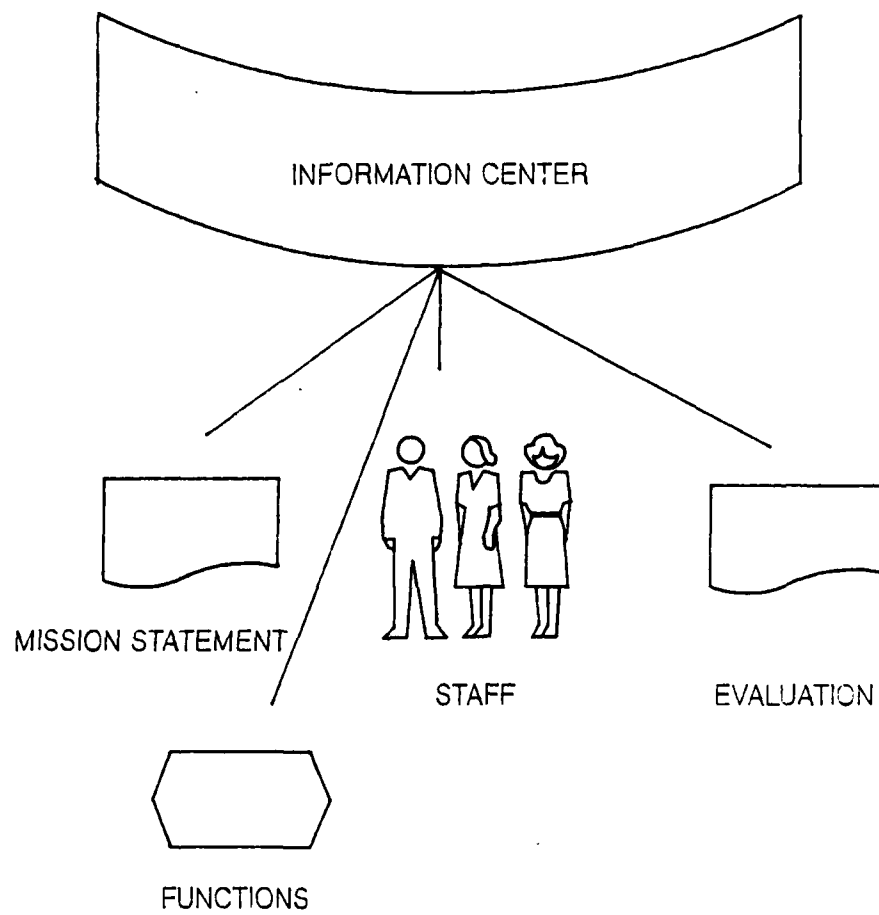
INFORMATION CENTERS DEFINITION and FUNCTIONS

The Information Center is a powerful concept that can offer much in the way of computing power to a manager. Robert H. Torgler, Manager of IBM's Business Professional Center - Bethesda, MD., identifies the IBM policy on centers as follows: "The Information Center is neither a process nor a product, but a strategy a DP manager can use to support and manage a company's burgeoning information needs." (1) This chapter establishes an Information Center concept suitable for an Air Force Base. A historical look at the evolution of Information Centers will establish a framework necessary for developing an IC concept for an Air Force Base. The areas to be addressed in developing the Base IC, Figure 5, Page 22, are: a mission statement; IC functions; staffing, and evaluation. Next, criteria necessary for evaluating IC performance is presented. Finally, interview results are analyzed and the proposed Base IC concept is refined.

HISTORICAL LOOK

IBM-Canada, in Toronto, provided the impetus behind the current Information Center approach. (2) In 1973, several systems analysts were dedicated to the User community to

FIGURE 5
INFORMATION CENTER COMPONENTS



help Users create their reports rather than the DP Department creating the reports. Because the DP Department was very busy, whenever Users attempted to get information, existing work backlogs prevented the analysts from providing timely service. Consequently, when a request was completed by the DP Department, the User no longer needed the information. (3)

Therefore, the analysts were attempting to make the Users self-sufficient by providing: education; consultation; and problem resolution. A central office was established, where Users could have access to the company's large computer via terminals. Non-procedural languages, tools for non-DP personnel, were used to extract corporate information. A non-procedural language, such as FOCUS, allows the User to say what is to be done (ie., retrieve a report), rather than be concerned with the detailed procedure for how it is to be done. As originally planned, this concept was created to support the DP Department. However, the concept proved so successful in eliminating the backlog and assisting Users, that IBM started marketing the idea to its customers in 1979. The bottom line was the idea that Users must do their own processing with the help of the Information Center.

Next, the Mission Statement and IC functions will be examined in light of implementing an IC on an Air Force Base.

MISSION STATEMENT

A Mission Statement details the direction the Information Center should take. The Statement establishes how the Center will operate and how the work will be done. L. W. Hammand, IBM, defines a Mission Statement as, "a concise statement of what will be done, how it will be done, and by whom." (4) The statement should have three sections: (5)

1. Mission Statement. For example, "Creating an environment to assist people to use personal computing products; or providing ongoing advice and consultation to personnel using the IC; or marketing the IC within the organization."
2. Steps to Accomplish the Mission. This section describes the steps, techniques, and areas to be addressed to ensure the mission is accomplished. For instance, the following may be included:
 - A. Procedures for installation of hardware and software;
 - B. User needs and feedback surveys;
 - C. Assist Users to do financial justifications
 - D. Development and use of User training modules
 - E. Preparation of articles for "advertising " what the IC has to offer.
3. Type of work the IC can handle. This section states the criteria to determine what types of work are acceptable for the IC environment. Such information should include: duration of effort, complexity of task, and User involvement.

The IC Operating Plan should be included in the Mission Statement as an appendix. The Operating Plan describes in detail the support the IC will provide to the User.

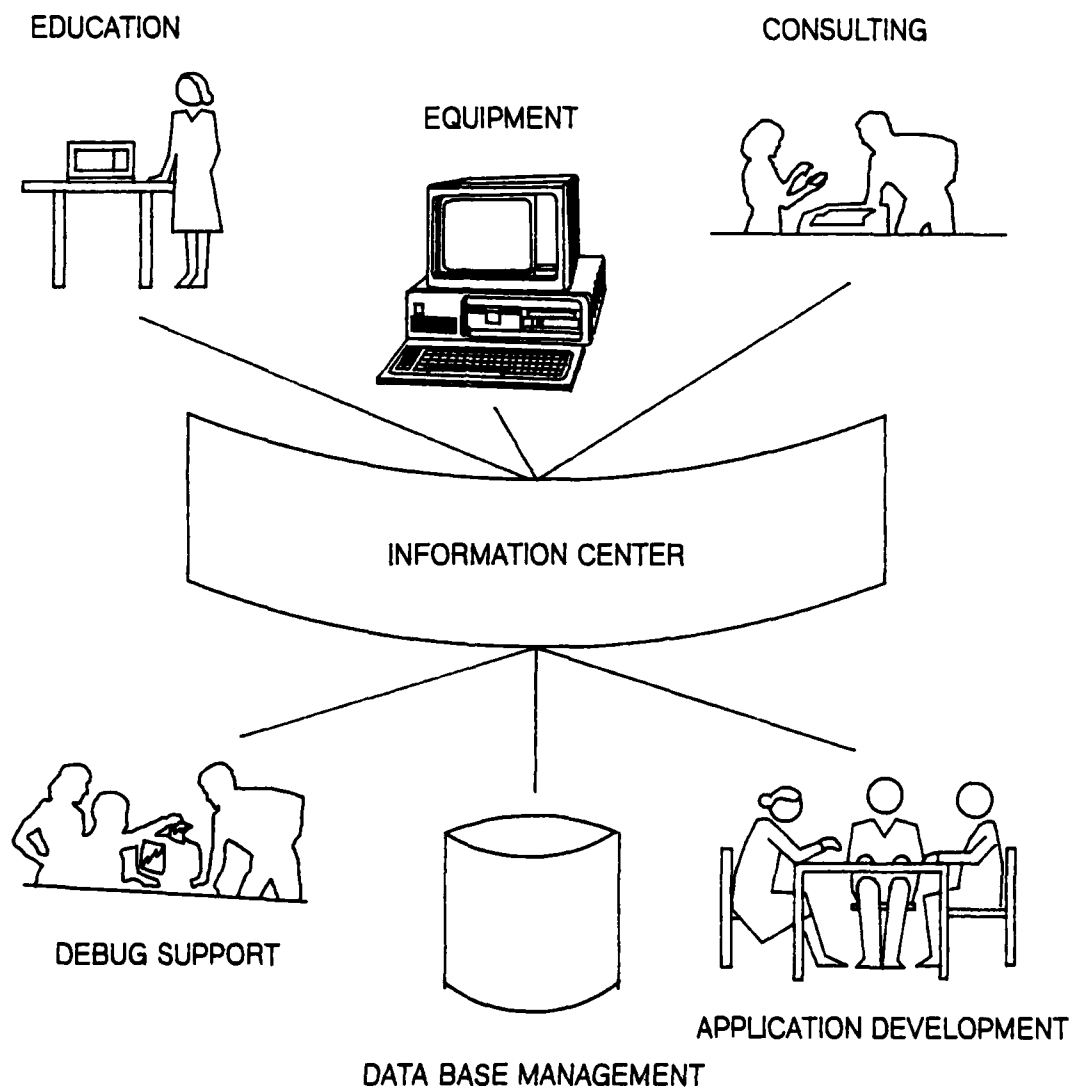
Developing the Mission Statement requires that all interested parties (ie., User, IC management, and top management) work in concert from the beginning. This "joint effort" is the first step in "Marketing" the IC concept.(6) As such, the statement conveys to the User community that the IC is being supported from the top.

FUNCTIONS

In order to support all Base Level Organizations, the Information Center must be able to offer a variety of functions. These functions, detailed in the following paragraphs, are also illustrated in Figure 6, Page 26.

1. Education. A Center's function is largely educational. The Users must be introduced to the Center's hardware and software. Formal education in the form of classes in word processing, report generation, and package use should be offered. Initially, courses may be taught by vendors or others from the Air Force Training Command. Most IC managers and related professionals are using traditional classroom instruction techniques - not computer-based methods - to train End Users in computer system use.(7) Computer-based methods of instruction require the student to "interact" or respond to information displayed on the computer terminal by pressing the appropriate key on the keyboard. This method allows the student to learn at his/her own pace. Therefore, the Base Level IC should have a classroom, with terminals, available for use. Having both the classroom and

FIGURE 6
INFORMATION CENTER FUNCTIONS



terminals would allow either instructional method to be used.

As Users progress in their "expertise", the education can shift from a classroom environment to an "hands-on" environment. During a hands-on session, the student is using the terminal vs listening to an instructor describe how a terminal or software package may work. This helps to reduce "computer-anxiety". (8) Once the User is comfortable with the terminal, the instructional level can then be advanced to include more complex subjects such as programming with fourth generation language packages (such as LOTUS 123) or querying a data base. Fourth generation packages automate many of the basic functions that a User had to spell out when using third generation languages such as COBOL. Additionally, as new hardware and software is added, the Center will train the Users to use the new component. Hence, the education function is a dynamic one that either expands or contracts to meet the needs of each individual User. Thus, the User is given "tailored" help in using the Information Center.

2. Controlling Equipment. The Center should take responsibility for monitoring the flow of micro-computers into the Base environment. This action will ensure that all equipment is compatible with the Center's resources. Plus allow the IC staff to provide adequate technical support with familiar equipment. Furthermore, the IC staff can

assist the Users with the "paperwork" required to comply with regulations for purchasing equipment (if desired).

3. Consulting. Working with computers and their associated tools are complicated enough for the "expert", let alone an End User. Consulting provides the "expert" User with assistance in performing non-routine User activities. These activities might include End User programming, feasibility analysis, availability of resources to meet the demand, or guiding the User in making the correct decision for developing an application.

4. Data Base Administrator (DBA). In conjunction with the User, the DBA determines what data should be in the data base(s). Also, the DBA identifies data-item synonyms and representation of them in the data dictionary. Furthermore, the DBA maintains reports cross referencing what data-items are used by Organizations. When Users, programmers or analysts require data that is not readily available, the DBA determines how and if the data can be retrieved. The DBA also monitors data base security, access lists, data base creation, and assigns update and delete permissions. Organizational responsibility, for the accuracy of each data-item, is also assigned by DBA. Finally, the DBA must survey the future needs of the User so the data bases can evolve and be compatible with these needs.(9) In short, the DBA controls and monitors all activity concerning the data base.

5. Application Development. Without a doubt, the majority of Users at an Air Force Base will be unskilled in computer usage. Simple program generation can possibly be performed by trained End Users. But, more complex program generation can be performed by consultants on the IC staff. However, this should be the exception, not the norm. The IC should not replace the formal systems development done at Gunter AFB, Alabama. If programming is done, it should be with fourth generation languages (ie., nonprocedural languages specifying what action is to be accomplished, not how the computer is to do the action) such as LOTUS 123, and not conventional languages as FORTRAN or COBOL. Programming with conventional languages is very time consuming and not readily understandable by the Users.

6. Debug Support. This function's objective is to relieve the User from "simple" problems. Debugging these problems generally takes but a few minutes. However the majority of the IC staff time will be spent debugging User problems. Debug support can be in the form of a "hot line", hand-outs discussing common problems, or simply just personal reassurance that the proper technique is being used. (10)

These six functions will provide the User with the capability to access data. These functions supply the technical support and services needed. However, the IC will not be successful, unless the IC staff can support the functions and "win over" the User.

INFORMATION CENTER STAFFING

An Information Center signals an important change in DP services offered to the User community. This change is direct service. The first meeting between computers and humans is very often the result of offering this service. As such, anxiety, fear, resistance and hostility are often the byproducts of this new relationship. Therefore, a properly staffed IC can provide a computing environment, free from these byproducts and one that is both productive and successful.(11)

According to L. W. Hammond, IBM, an IC manager plus two or three consultants can serve as the start-up staff.(12) However, this assumes that during the IC start-up period, the number of Users is limited to five and only one or two software packages are offered. A larger staff is required if the User group is increased in size or more software packages are offered. However, by initially limiting User group size and the number of software packages offered, IC growth may be controlled. If IC growth is not controlled, the danger exists for the IC resources to be overextended. Thus creating the same situations the IC is supposed to resolve. Initial IC staff duties should include:(13)

1. Installing new software packages;
2. Training on new packages;
3. Ensure "User-friendly" software package dialogues are available;
4. Developing User guides for the packages;
5. Developing education classes and associated materials for the packages;
6. Conducting project feasibility tests with Users;

7. "Marketing" the Information Center and packages.

Of course, these duties are repetitive every time a new package is acquired.

Staff Roles. The main roles are consulting, teaching, and assisting Users at the terminal. Responsibilities should include: supporting software packages; developing training modules and presenting them; evaluating User requests on approaches to solving problems; and "soothing" User's anxieties. The following paragraphs explore the roles closer. (14)

1. Consultant. Assists Users in developing requests for support. These individuals must be experts in the uses and functions of all packages available to the IC. Additionally, the consultant screens requests to ensure all guidelines for IC use are adhered to and forward requests not appropriate for the IC to the systems development staff.
2. Teacher. Instructs Users on terminal access, problem-solving skills and package use. Teach Users how to "spell out" needs in a manner suitable for the IC. Of course formal education classes are also a responsibility of the teacher.
3. Terminal assistance. Every staff member must be skilled and able to provide some level of terminal assistance to the User. For example, be able to answer simple questions about package usage, sign-on procedure and general terminal usage. The goal is to increase the User's confidence in using the terminal.

The staff member is an important key to the IC's success. Therefore, as a general rule, the staff member should have the proper attitudes to ensure the correct image of the IC is received by the User.

Such attitudes should include: (15)

1. Interpersonal communications skills
2. Initiative
3. Teaching Ability
4. Problem-solving skills
5. Patience and persistence
6. Application and package expertise
7. "Salesmanship".

INFORMATION CENTER EVALUATION - A REPORT CARD

As the IC is a relatively new concept, the application of the concept must be evaluated constantly to allow corrections as the IC evolves. A measurement system should include an appropriate chargeback system - a tool to allocate costs back to the User. Since the Air Force is not in the profit-making business, this chargeback should inform the User about computer resource utilization (i.e., disk storage, CPU time, paper usage). Collection of this information will help both the IC's staff and the User in scheduling IC usage and gauging the Center's supply usage rate (paper, disks, etc.). This information gives the User an idea how much the processing is costing.

Just as the User is evaluated, the IC staff and services rendered must be reviewed. User surveys, issued periodically, must be undertaken. This action will provide feedback necessary for staff evaluation. In addition, the User could fill out a critique after completing each session at the terminal. If the terminal is operating in an online mode (attached directly to a computer mainframe), a critique form may be displayed on the terminal's screen. Thus, the

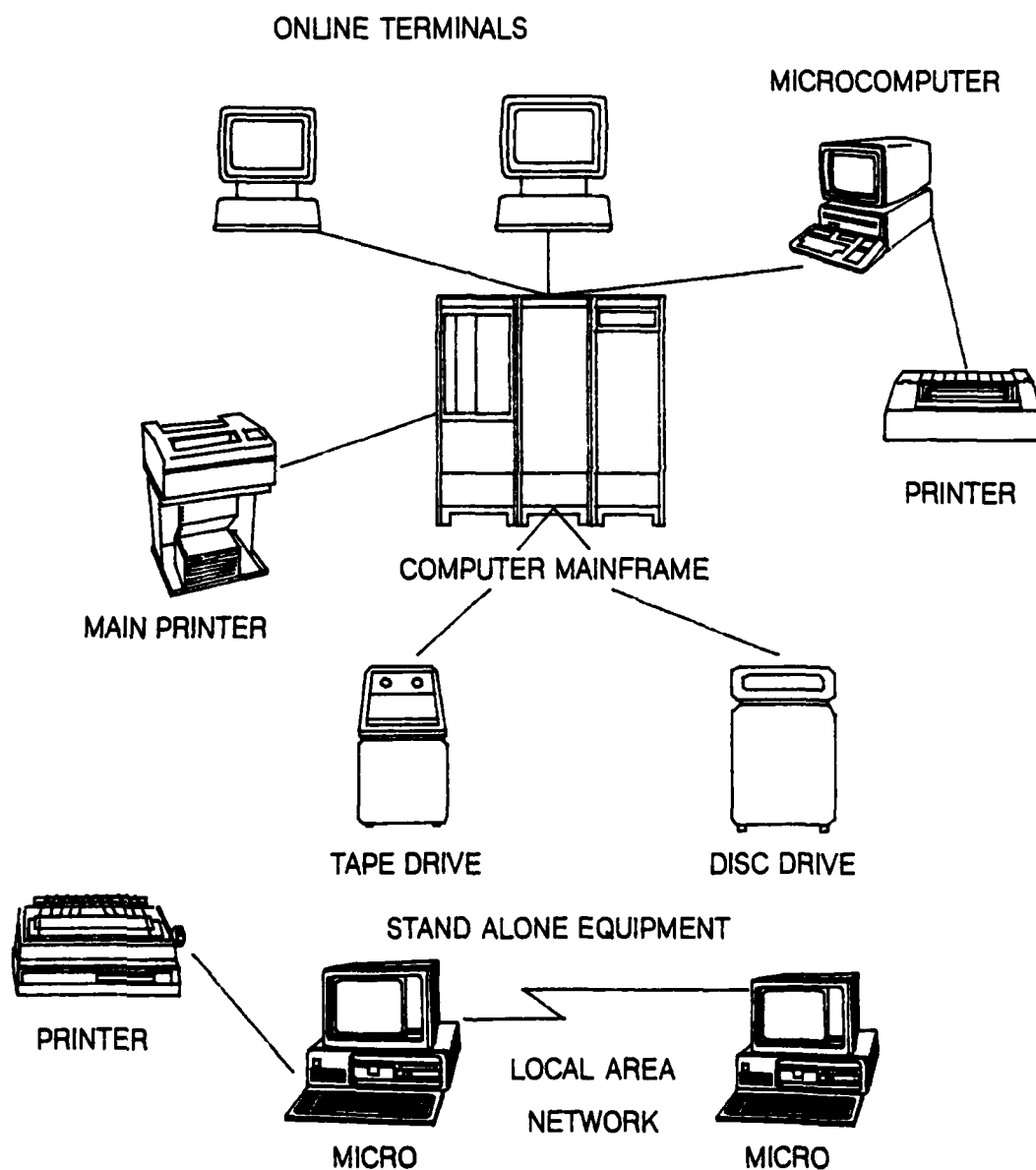
form may be displayed on the terminal's screen. Thus, the review would be instantaneous and would require very little User effort. This review could be done via the menu concept. In this concept, the User "converses" with the computer and completes the critique.

HARDWARE and SOFTWARE

At this time, addressing general hardware and software requirements would be beneficial in providing a look at the physical aspects of an Information Center.

Hardware. An IC contains a variety of computer related hardware. Figure 7, Page 34 illustrates an example of hardware. A typical Center may include a mixture of terminals linked to a computer mainframe or stand alone microcomputer. The stand alone microcomputers can function independent of a large computer mainframe. A microcomputer (or personal computer) is characterized by an instruction processor reduced to "microscopic" size. A microcomputer contains a visual display screen and possibly two secondary storage floppy disk drives. A printer may also be attached to the microcomputer. The micro may converse with a larger computer via a modem. The modem converts computer signals into a signal capable for transmission over a phone line. In addition, a graphics capable printer should also be included. Frequently, microcomputers are linked in a "network". A network allows the movement of information from one point to another point via a communications system such as phone lines.

FIGURE 7
AN EXAMPLE OF
INFORMATION CENTER HARDWARE



Software. Software needs in an IC also vary. Figure 8, Page 36, displays software packages generally found in ICs. These include electronic mail, spreadsheets, data base management, wordprocessing, graphics, decision support, project scheduling, software to access a larger computer mainframe, and report generation. A data dictionary should also be included. A dictionary ensures standardized use of all data-items and can simplify program generation.

INFORMATION CENTER LOCATION

Ideally, the information should be in a location central to all Users. However, an Air Force Base typically covers a large area and Base Level Organizations are not always conveniently located close to each other. Therefore, during the implementation phase, approximately four to eight months, (16) all the IC resources should be located in one location. Hopefully, this location should be near the Users selected for the pilot group. The IC location must also include classroom space for formal education presentations. As Users no longer need constant assistance, computer equipment may be installed in their respective areas. If assistance is required, the IC staff can be reached by phone.

CONCEPT SUMMARY

Although functions and formats may vary from Base to Base, the information presented in Table 2, Page 37, summarizes the components of an Information Center suitable for an Air Force Base. This concept was based solely upon

FIGURE 8
AN EXAMPLE OF
INFORMATION CENTER SOFTWARE

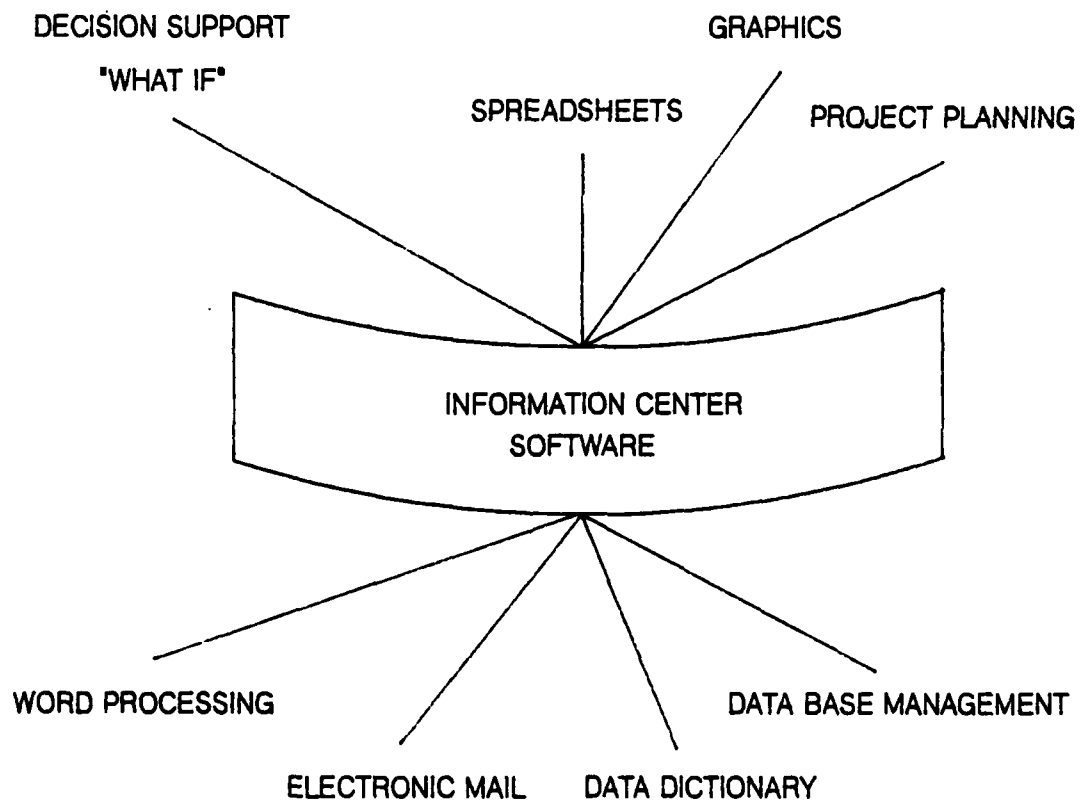


TABLE 2
BASE LEVEL
INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT

<u>COMPONENT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Mission Statement	Details the direction the IC should take. Four sections are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Statement 2. Steps to Accomplish Mission 3. Work the IC can handle 4. Operating Plan
Functions	Describes the services the IC will offer. The six functions are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education 2. Controlling Equipment 3. Consulting 4. Data Base Administration 5. Application Development 6. Debug Support
Staffing	Capable of supporting the following roles: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultant 2. Teacher 3. Assist in terminal operations
Evaluation	Procedures to monitor the performance of the IC concept using techniques such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Chargeback System 2. User critiques, and surveys

secondary sources (i.e., computer-related articles and books). The concept contains four components: a mission statement, Information Center functions, a staff, and evaluation. The mission statement details how the Base Level IC will operate and the type of work the IC can handle. To service the variety of Base Organizations, the IC should offer the following functions: education; controlling equipment; consulting; data base administration; application development; and debug support. The final component, staffing, establishes an important relationship between the IC and the User community. The IC staff helps reduce Users' "computer-anxieties". The initial staff should have at least an IC manager and two or three consultants. The staff should be capable of supporting a variety of roles such as consultant, teacher, and assisting in terminal operations. In addition to these three components, procedures should be established to allow the IC's performance to be evaluated. This may be done via User's critiques and feedback.

In the next section, the results of interviews with IC managers, in the business community, will be used to refine this initial concept. This refinement provides first hand impressions about Information Centers.

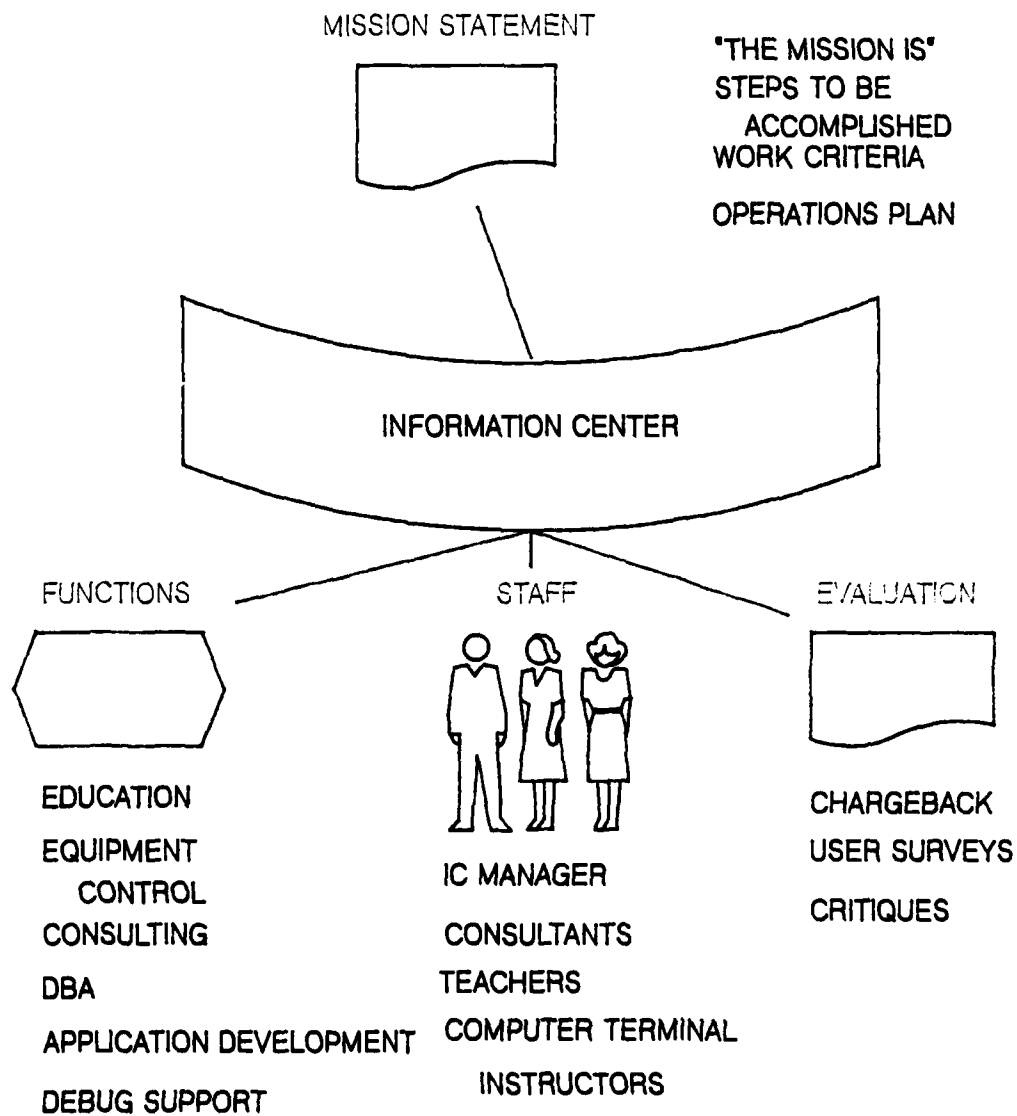
INTERVIEW RESULTS

The information gathered in the interviews supports the concept illustrated in Figure 9, Page 39. The Information Center Managers concurred that their ICs contained portions of the four components addressed in the Base Level

FIGURE 9

BASE LEVEL

INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT



Information Center concept. Additionally, the Base Level IC concept was enhanced with several ideas provided by the IC managers. The enhancements occurred in the following areas:

1. Mission Statements. All the ICs contacted (see Bibliography, Page 72) had an IC mission statement. From all the information gathered concerning mission statements, Mr. Pazer's (IBM-Boulder, Colorado) comments were most prudent. (17) He considers the mission statement to be dynamic. As a result, Mr. Pazer re-examines his IC's mission statement every year. His mission statement is concerned with tactical (one year) and strategic (more than one year) outlooks. In short, Mr. Pazer is allowing the mission statement to evolve along with the User's computer needs. Consequently, the mission statement proposed for the Base Level IC should also be re-examined on a yearly basis, for both tactical and strategic changes.

2. IC Functions. The functions proposed earlier (education, equipment control, consulting, data base administration, application development, and debug support) were all present in the ICs examined. However, beneficial information was only gathered on these areas:

- A. Education. The IC managers agreed that education was the most important function offered by the IC. Mr. Pazer said he enhanced his IC education program by submitting articles to a IBM-Boulder newsletter. In addition, he encourages successful IC Users to also publish articles.

This shows the Users that "one of their own" is successful at using the IC.

B. Controlling Equipment. All the ICs had strict policies controlling the hardware present in the IC and throughout their respective plants. IBM had an in-plant store. This store displayed all types of hardware available for purchase by the User. Therefore, any computer hardware selected must come from the equipment displayed in the store. Teledyne, on the other hand, had a strict policy -- only IBM equipment could be purchased.(18) As, the Federal Government and Department of Defense controls equipment purchased, these ideas cannot be used. The Federal Government requires all equipment be purchased via a vendor bidding process and the low bidder wins the contract.

Continuing with equipment control both Teledyne and IBM had a "vote" in approving or disapproving a hardware request. Mr. Hendrick, Teledyne Waterpick, observes who is using the IC.(19) If the request is initiated by a User who is not a frequent IC visitor, gaining approval for the request is very difficult. Mr. Hendrick uses this approach to control the frivolous use of a terminal. This control technique could be beneficial in controlling micro use at Base Level.

C. Consulting. The consulting being done in the ICs, matched the consulting function proposed in the Base Level concept, with a few exceptions. Mr. Pazer strongly encourages his Users to strike out on their own. In other words,

the Users are not monitored concerning the size or scope of their IC work. As such, Mr. Pazer is not overly concerned that the Users may "bite off more than they can chew". Conversely, Mr. Hendrick continues to monitor the Users to ensure their projects are not too overwhelming. Initially, checking back with the Users is a good idea. However, constantly monitoring the project would be time consuming and could possibly cause a disruption of work. But, for the initial Base Level IC concept, these minor problems should be temporary ignored, and procedures for monitoring Users should be included in the IC operating plan. Monitoring the User's work may uncover operations in the IC that require further "fine-tuning".

3. IC Evaluation. In the ICs examined, there existed no formal evaluation procedures. Mr. Pazer, indicated that any type of productivity measurement is very dependent upon the individual. Therefore, the IBM-Boulder IC does not do any type of daily User evaluation. Yet, once a year, a User survey is undertaken to assess User attitudes about the IC. As User attitudes and impressions are very important during the implementation phase, the initial Base Level concept should still propose to conduct constant User appraisals of the IC. These appraisals may provide feedback necessary to adjust the IC concept.

CONCEPT REVISION

As a result of the information gathered from the interviews, the following areas in the concept were revised:

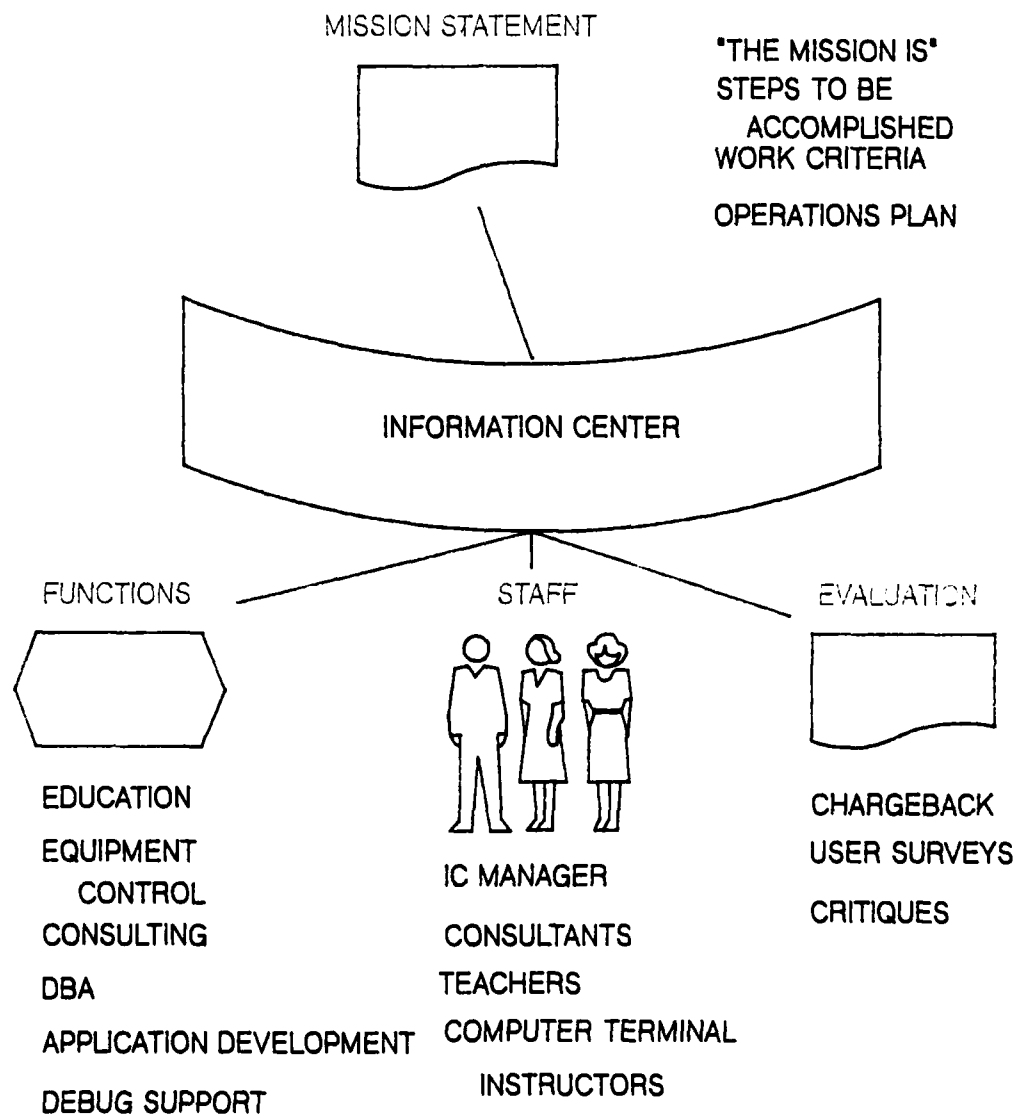
1. Mission Statement - include yearly revision, thus allowing the mission statement to continually meet the Users' needs.
2. Functions -
 - A. Education - expand IC publications to take advantage of Users' successes.
 - B. Hardware Control - no revision.
 - C. Consulting - during the initial implementation period, continue monitoring User's projects to prevent the Users from taking on too much.
3. Staffing - no revision.
4. IC Evaluation - no revision.

In summary, the Base Level Information Center concept is still comprised of four areas: mission statement; IC functions; staffing; and IC evaluation. No major changes to the concept were realized from the interview results. Only minor adjustments to the mission statement and two functions (education and consulting) were made. Table 3, Page 44 and Figure 10, Page 45 illustrate the final concept.

TABLE 3
REVISED
BASE LEVEL
INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT

<u>COMPONENT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
Mission Statement	Details the direction the IC should take. Four sections are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Statement 2. Steps to Accomplish Mission 3. Work the IC can handle 4. Operating Plan
Functions	Describes the services the IC will offer. The six functions are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education 2. Controlling Equipment 3. Consulting 4. Data Base Administration 5. Application Development 6. Debug Support
Staffing	Capable of supporting the following roles: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultant 2. Teacher 3. Assist in terminal operations
Evaluation	Procedures to monitor the performance of the IC concept using techniques such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Chargeback System 2. User critiques, and surveys

FIGURE 10
BASE LEVEL
INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT



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CHAPTER FOUR

NEEDS IDENTIFICATION and PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Currently, Base Level Organizations are experiencing a variety of problems associated with decision-making activities.(1) These problems can possibly be alleviated with an Information Center. Hence, this chapter will identify and group the problems. Next, the Information Center Concept, identified in the Chapter Three, will be applied to problem groups in an effort to simplify or eliminate problems. The problem groups are: Education/Training, Timely Access to Data, and Application Backlog.

EDUCATION/TRAINING

The Air Force is a very dynamic environment. Individuals are generally required to PCS (Permanent Change of Station) or in civilian terms, transfer to new duty stations approximately every three to four years. Naturally, this constant moving creates "a void of knowledgeable individuals" in Organizations. As such, new individuals or even individuals currently in the Organization must be trained or retrained to fill the void. Currently, the Air Training Command is not equipped or manned to train every individual who requires computer access. Computer courses taught at

Kessler AFB, Biloxi, Miss., are mainly for new personnel entering the computer career field or advance training for those already in the field. These courses cover such topics as COBOL programming, timesharing usage, assembler programming (very technical) and data base management. Consequently, End Users must seek training either from the "resident guru" or educate themselves.

Furthermore, there are many individuals, "new recruits", entering the Air Force every month. These recruits are normally recent high school graduates with very limited exposure to computers (i.e., high school courses). Additionally, personal observation has shown that many "old timers" also have limited knowledge about computers. A recent Air Force decision concerning microcomputers further illustrates the need for computer training. (2)

Capt. Ronnie Hawkins, an Air Force DFI (Data Processing Installation) Chief, said the Air Force had recently ordered approximately 1,700 Zenith Z-100 Microcomputers. (3) These micros are for Base Level Organizations. Additionally, the micros will be dispersed to these Organizations without any training for the Users. Apparently, this situation will occur throughout the Air Force. Capt. Donnely, 2149 Information Services Squadron, reiterated the same point. (4) Consequently, the Air Force is acquiring potentially powerful tools, but the future Users will be "in the dark" concerning their use. Lacking any centralized agency to turn to for assistance, the Users could quickly become

frustrated. As such, the micros may be abandoned for the "old ways" of doing work by "stubbie pencil".

The Information Center can help solve this education problem. As David Kull notes, "The Information Center's function is largely educational." (5) The IC concept, defined in Chapter Three, addresses the basic User's training needs. For example, an IC instructor can teach Users how to operate a terminal or use a particular software package. As Users become more sophisticated, the IC staff will assist the User in learning the more complex features of a software package. Also via educational seminars offered by the IC, Users may discover simpler ways for accomplishing everyday requirements. Finally, if new software packages are acquired, the IC staff can educate the Users how to operate the new software packages.

The IC can also serve as a centralized point for supporting micros - both from a hardware and software viewpoint. As there are approximately 133 Base Level computer installations throughout the Air Force, standarization is a major concern. Via the IC, control could be maintained. For example, a central agency, responsible for IC software, can act as the repository for all IC software. This agency would control all software usage plus catalog and issue any software originated at Base Level to ICs, who can use the software. Furthermore, this agency could also provide standardized software operating instructions.

TIMELY ACCESS TO DATA

Currently, the majority of processing on the Base Level computer, a Burroughs B3500, is in batch mode. Batch processing is also called sequential processing because all instructions must be in a certain sequence. Essentially in this batch mode environment, computer punch cards are still predominately used. As such, the User's access to data is very slow. On an Air Force Base, the User is often required to go across Base to the central computer site and submit a card deck for processing. After the job is complete, the User must return and pickup the output. Thus the User has very little timely access to information. Capt. Hawkins indicated sixty percent of his computer's processing is devoted to batch processing. The majority of batch processing occurs at night. (6)

Query capabilities on the B3500 are very limited. A very rigid format must be followed. In other words, only "canned" or preprogrammed reports can be retrieved. In addition, the DPI staff is neither required nor manned to provide adequate support to help Users with their queries.

There are twenty-five different data bases resident on a Base Level computer. Essentially, each Organization has its own data base. Therefore, multiple queries must often be made to complete a report. As a result of these individual data bases, Capt. Hawkins remarked that approximately fifteen percent of this data is redundant in all data bases. (7)

As opposed to having the data and not being able to access it, some Organizations do not have any access to data processing capabilities at all. For example, the 90th Security Police Group at F. E. Warren AFB, Cheyenne, Wyoming, accomplishes its mission without any computer support. Lt. Col. Tom Safford, Deputy Commander, indicated that scheduling the security guards for each missile launch site, security patrols for the Base, managing the auto registration program, and monitoring the weapons and ammunition inventory requires an excessive amount of manpower.(8) In other words, Lt. Col. Safford would greatly benefit from any computer support.

The Information Center allows Users to access their own information when they need it. Under an Information Center, End Users learn the self-sufficiency required to retrieve their data when they need it as opposed to waiting on a "batch oriented" processing system. A technically oriented IC staff can solve most problems that a User might encounter in everyday processing.(9) As a result, the User is not left to "flounder" on his own, wasting precious time trying to access data.

The Data Base Administration (DBA) function of the IC also helps the User access data. The DBA will ensure the data, the User needs, is available. In other words, the DBA will coordinate with Users to ensure the necessary data is readily available; if not, steps will be taken to put the data into the proper format. For example, a User might

require a central data base be resorted into a different order for a one time access. The DBA can accomplish the procedures necessary to satisfy this request. In addition, the DBA's maintenance of a data dictionary will help simplify the redundant data problem. The dictionary is a catalogue of data types, giving their names, structures and information about usage. This dictionary allows cross-referencing between Users to show who accesses each data-item. (10)

Once the User's data is available, the IC Trainer and Consultant can assist the User. If the potential User is unskilled at data processing, or does not even know what can be done, the Trainer can be of great assistance. As education is a premier function of the Information Center, the Trainer can "enlighten" the User as to what the Information Center can do. When the User begins working in the IC, a Consultant can assist with product selection, generation of applications, debugging support and generally assisting the User in locating the data needed.

For an excellent illustration, consider the plight of the 90th Security Group at F. E. Warren AFB. A recent study conducted by Kenneth Engle, demonstrated how a simple data management system could be designed and implemented on an IBM Personal Computer. (11) Engle used the LOTUS 123 Spreadsheet Software to build the system. Engle's system used a key word to access information about periodicals. This same

methodology could easily be applied to a vehicle registration or inventory system in an Information Center environment.

APPLICATIONS BACKLOG

As the historical look in Chapter Three showed, the Information Center was initiated to bolster End User productivity and to reduce the applications backlog. Base Level Users are also experiencing this long wait for requested programs. Mr. Paul Austin, Deputy DPI Chief at Lowry AFB, Denver, Colorado, estimated the backlog for Base Level programs is approximately two to three years in length.(12) However, the Air Force backlog was not generated for the same reasons as the backlog experienced in the civilian world.

The civilian backlog has resulted from a surge in requests for computer programs. The backlog is comprised of requests for changes and enhancements to existing systems (ie., maintenance), new applications that interface with current systems, and requests for new stand alone applications or systems.(13) According to both Mr. Austin and Capt. Hawkins, the Base Level backlog is the direct result of the moratorium on program development at the Data Design Center at Gunter AFB, Montgomery, Alabama. Why? Because the Air Force is converting the software, currently executing on the B3500, for future operation on the new Sperry X3 1100/60s. The X3s are to replace the B3500s as the new Base

Level computer. Capt. Hawkins further indicated, the conversion effort is being done line by line (ie., one line of B3500 code for one line of Sperry code).(14) In addition, the installation of the Sperry at Capt. Hawkins' computer site has been delayed for six to nine months. As a result, Base Level Users are being forced to wait for new software programs. But, emergency program maintenance is still being done on a case by case basis.

The Information Center concept can help the User and the DP Organization lessen the backlog. Software provided by the Center can be used directly by the User. Therefore, the User can execute this software to do a variety of functions such as graphics and report generation, financial modeling, budgeting, information access, inventory control, and personnel scheduling. The Information Center can also address the hidden backlog.(15)

The hidden backlog consists of items required by individuals or groups. The backlog is hidden because these items are never formally submitted to the DP Organization. Although this task is difficult to measure, it can be eased with the Information Center approach. The Air Force does not allow any programming to be done by the Base DPI Staff. All programs are standard and developed by the Design Center at Gunter. Therefore, almost no flexibility exists to support individual requests at each Base. The Information Center can provide the flexibility Users need to satisfy their daily information needs. By allowing the Users to

create their own programs, the backlog and inflexibility of the Design Center at Gunter may be avoided. Thus, program requests that were never submitted because of the applications backlog may now be done by the User. Once individual programs are developed, they can be forwarded to a central Information Center. This Center could publish a catalog, announcing the availability of these and other programs for use.

George Harrar, COMPUTERWORLD Senior Editor for Features, remarked:

"Two years ago, the Information Center was an appealing concept without a track record. Today, there is a record - the experiences of the companies which installed Information Centers early on. The Information Center promised much. Now the promises can be matched to reality by looking at the Center not as an IBM concept, but rather as an up-and-running part of several large American companies." (16)

In short, the Information Center can help simplify the decision-making and information gathering processes on an Air Force Base.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS

Information Centers are becoming popular.(1) Hence this study's purpose has been to evaluate the Information Center in terms of its application to Air Force Base Level Organizations. The following paragraphs will summarize the study's effort, beginning with Conclusions drawn from the findings. Finally, recommendations for further study efforts are provided.

SUMMARY

An examination of Air Force Base Level Organizations established a framework for investigating the informational needs of these Organizations. The Air Force's overall objective is to provide aerospace forces capable of supporting the Nation's objectives in peace and war. An examination of the Command structure revealed how important Base Level Organizations are to the Air Force. As, General Arnold said, "The success of our Air Forces in combat will be determined by the perfection of the Organization that supports them." (2) Therefore, the majority of Chapter Two was devoted to defining Organizations that are common on all Air Force Bases and their associated informational needs.

Attendees at the recent 1984 Information Center Conference and Exposition concurred that the Information Center Concept has changed since its conception by IBM.(3) In, Chapter Three, an historical look at the IC helped established why civilian businesses are accepting the Information Center. Simply stated, Information Centers are increasing End User productivity.

After this historical look, a preliminary Information Center Concept, applicable to an Air Force environment, was developed. The initial Concept addressed four areas: the Mission Statement, IC Functions, Staffing, and IC Evaluation. The Mission Statement details how the Base Level Center will operate, the type of work the IC can handle, and describes the steps and techniques the IC will follow. The Base Level IC should offer the following Education/Training, Controlling Equipment, Consulting, Data Base Administration, Application Development, and Debugging Support. One of the more important assets of the Base Level IC is its staff. The staff should be capable of supporting the roles of consultant, teacher, and provide assistance in operating the Center's equipment.

Next, to gain a first hand impression of ICs in the local business community, Information Center managers were interviewed. On the whole, there were very few differences between the preliminary Concept and information provided by the interviews. However, there was some useful

information concerning the IC mission statement, the education function, and the consulting function gathered.

Base Level Organizations are dynamic, changing constantly to meet the overall demands of the Department of the Air Force. Therefore, it makes little sense for the IC mission statement to "be cast in stone". Taking the idea from Mr. Pazer, IBM-Boulder, the mission statement must be reevaluated every year.(4) This reevaluation should be from both a tactical and strategic viewpoint. Hence, the Base Level IC's mission statement should be reevaluated from both these viewpoints. Education and consultation are both important functions offered by the IC. Mr. Pazer provided some useful information about "advertising" the Information Center's education function. He suggested that successful IC Users be encouraged to publish articles detailing their IC successes. These articles may appear in a company newsletter or an IC publication. Thus, this action may encourage other potential Users to come to the IC. Therefore, this idea was included in the final concept. Mr. Hendrick, Teledyne Waterpick, recommended that Users' IC activities should continued to be monitored during the IC's implementation phase.(6) This is an excellent idea as IC operations that may need "fine-tuning" can be uncovered. So, procedures for monitoring the Users' activities should be included in the IC's operations plan.

Chapter Four explored the decision-making and information needs of Base Level Organizations. As the Air Force is

essentially a big business, its education/training needs are enormous. As noted by Joseph G. Izzo, President of JIA Management Group INC., a California based management consulting firm, "It (the IC) is a shortcut for Users to get data and reports directly." (5) Base Level Organizations have the same need to quickly access their information. End Users are also confronted with an applications backlog. However, this backlog is the result of a decision to replace Base Level computers. But, the end result is the same, Air Force End Users must wait for their new applications.

The Base Level Information Center concept developed in Chapter Three can meet the Base Level needs. One function of the Base IC is to educate/train End Users. The IC Data Base Administration function can assist the User in accessing data via a variety of data retrieval techniques. As the IC encourages End Users to do "their own work", some of the application backlog can be reduced.

Thus, the Information Center concept developed to meet the needs of Base Level Organizations addresses four areas.

1. Mission Statement. This statement details the direction the IC should take. Its four sections are: mission statement; steps to accomplish the mission; work the IC can handle; and an appendix containing the operating plan.
2. Functions. The IC should offer the following functions: education; control equipment; consulting; data base administration; application development; and debug support.

3. Staffing. The IC should be capable of supporting the following roles: consultant; teacher; and assist in equipment operations.
4. Evaluation. Procedures to monitor the performance of the IC concept using techniques such as: a chargeback system or User critiques, and surveys.

CONCLUSION

There is one large difference between Information Centers and traditional Data Processing Departments. Via an IC, Managers and employees (End Users) can retrieve information directly instead of "pushing" a request through a team of Data Processing analysts and programmers. As L. W. Hammond, IBM, remarks:

"The fundamental premise underlying an Information Center is that if provided proper education, technical support, usable tools, data availability, and convenient access to the system, users may directly and rapidly satisfy a portion of their business area requirements that depend on an I/S (Information Systems) environment."(7)

After examining the needs of Base Level Organizations, the need for a Base Level IC is evident. As proposed in the Information Center concept, functions such as report generation and modification, data retrieval, queries and education can contribute significantly to facilitating End User problem-solving activities and information needs.

In short, the Crwth Computer Coursewares, a vendor of interactive computer-based training, believes a company's success will ultimately depend upon its ability to train large numbers of End Users to use information resources

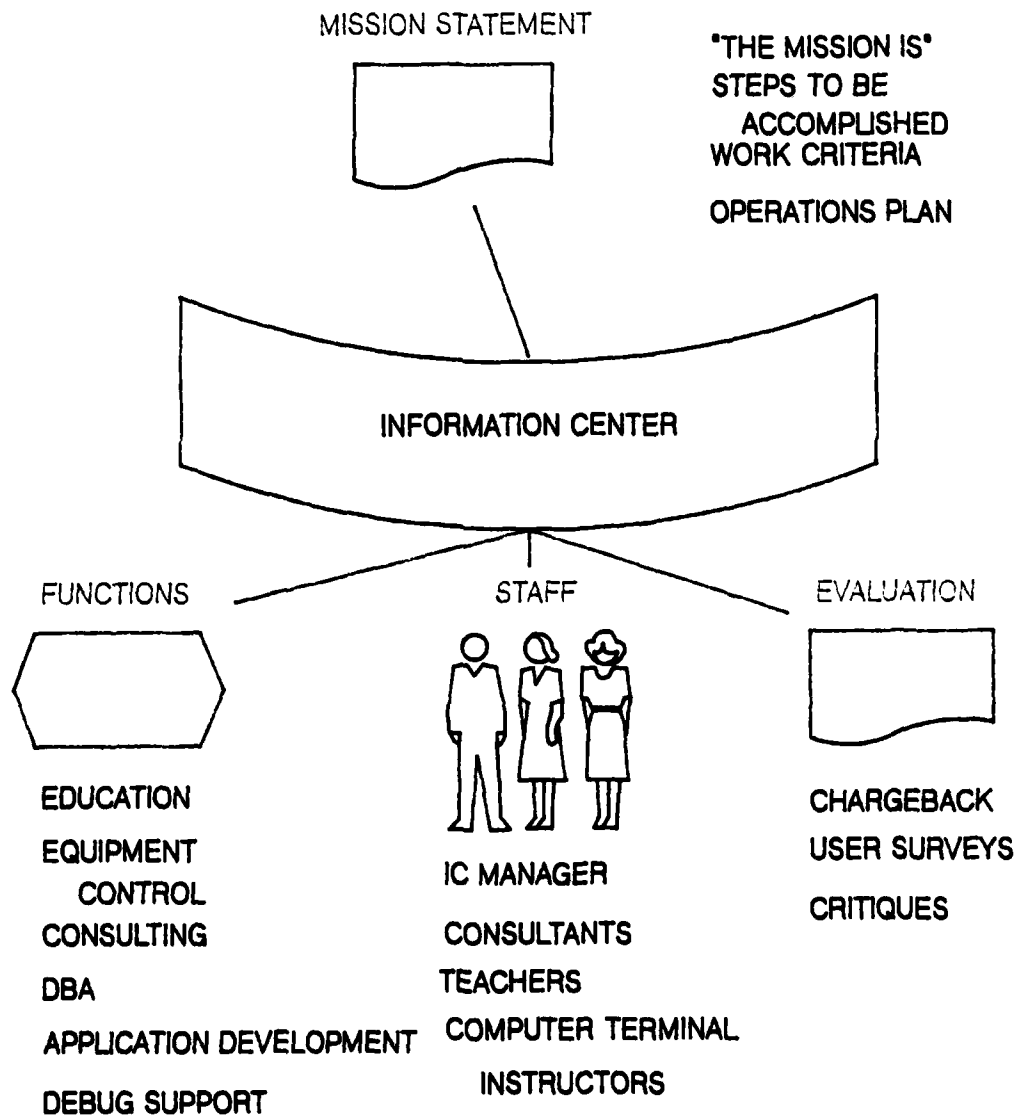
advantageously. Furthermore, "By supporting End User computing, the Information Center can play an important role in providing faster, better access to corporate information".(8) By applying an Information Center concept, the Air Force could be in a position to better utilize its End Users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends an Information Center, using the concept developed in Chapter Three, Figure 11, Page 65, be implemented on an Air Force Base. Further time and analysis must be devoted to an Information Center strategy if the Information Center potential is to be realized. Beginning Information Center operations based solely on this study would be premature. Many areas such as hardware/software selection, selection of initial Users, funding, etc., must be considered.

According to Chester R. Mills, the Information Center's strategic planning process is divided into four areas: Potential Information Center User Requirements Analysis; Potential Information Center User Knowledge and Expertise; Preparing for Information Center Implementation; and Understanding and Managing Information Center Operations and Proliferation.(9) This study addressed only the first area, Potential Information Center User Requirements Analysis. Consequently, the remaining three areas must be researched to establish a "complete" concept.

FIGURE 11
BASE LEVEL
INFORMATION CENTER CONCEPT



The future for the Information Center is unlimited. It is a powerful concept that has substantial merit in today's Base Level information processing environment.(10) But, the power, per say, does not come from the Information Center concept. The power comes from what the Information Center makes possible in the mind of the User. Therefore, the Information Center concept and its application to Base Level Organizations should continued to be studied.

If, the Air Force decides to implement Information Centers to support Base Level Organizations, perhaps the remaining planning may follow these suggested steps:

1. Determine software and hardware requirements. Determine if any in-house programming will be done for IC software. Begin vendor selection process.
2. Select IC staff and begin their training.
3. Prepare for IC implementation by selecting a pilot base(s) for installation. Determine physical characteristics.
4. Select initial Users and begin their training.
5. Determine IC growth phases and evolution, for expansion to other Bases.

In closing, the Information Center concept holds the potential to establish a new User/Data Processing partnership which may, in the end, benefit the entire Air Force.

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